ture of economic and social life. The Chinese display great capacity for extra-political organization. The individual who attempts to stand alone has found and finds himself at a great disadvantage. Families, secret societies, villages, and guilds of many kinds have long been characteristic. The guilds have been largely confined to walled towns and cities—the larger population centers. As we shall see more in detail later, guilds have been of many kinds and have been formed not only by handicraftsmen but by merchants, by various occupations and interests, such as the barbers, the beggars, the blind, the masons, the carpenters, the cooks, the story-tellers, the actors, and the waiters. Those that for the moment concern us may be called craft guilds, although that classification would probably not be made by the Chinese.

The craft guilds have usually not been so elaborate or so wealthy as the merchants[5] guilds. As a rule they have been purely local organizations and not provincial or national—although there may be affiliations which exercise wider than local influence. Membership has been practically compulsory to all those of a particular craft. If an individual refuses to join, ways can be found to induce him to change his mind. He may even be visited with personal violence, and government officials know better than to interfere. It has been exceptional, however, for an eligible man to decline to apply. The advantages are so obvious that usually no persuasion is required. The guild, indeed, has had as one of its functions the maintenance within its vicinity of a monopoly for its members. It seeks to restrain competition within its ranks. To that end it fixes both the minimum prices of the products and the wages of employees. For the same reason it

regulates the hours of labor and the rest periods. A member who refuses to conform or who violates the rules is subject to punishment, ranging all the way from fines to death. The guilds have performed many services for their members. They have helped them collect debts and have afforded protection against thieves. They also often assume some of the functions of a benevolent society. Some of them have their own cemeteries, and many provide coffins and funeral expenses for the burial of their poor. Numbers arrange for medical care for ill members. Each has a patron divinity or divinities to whom it pays communal worship. For example, in at least one place the tailors have had the mythical Emperor